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LETTER DATED 8 FEBRUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

With my highest respects to you and members of the Security Council, I wish to present my Government's disappointment over the international impunity which is encouraging Ethiopia to indulge in dangerous military adventures with grave consequences.

Despite widespread international calls, including that of the Security Council, to refrain from the use of force in the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute, the Ethiopian regime has continued to use force to violate Eritrean sovereignty and grab Eritrean territory. Despite Eritrea's consistent stand that the border dispute can and should be resolved by peaceful and legal means, and persistent calls for a ceasefire or cessation of all hostilities since the conflict erupted, the Ethiopian regime has continued to threaten and use war to dictate its will.

Unmindful of Eritrea's, and the international community's, assertion that force cannot solve the border dispute, the Ethiopian regime has persisted in its warpath, and once again, after a long lull, has launched a renewed offensive, on 5 February 1999.

The cause behind the military adventures of the Ethiopian regime in the past nine months is clearly the miscalculations and misconceptions that it entertained. Partial blame however rests with the international community. In this regard, the impunity with which Ethiopia's excesses have been tolerated has become a major factor in encouraging its adventures.

Indeed, while it was and remains known that the Tigre People's Liberation Front regime has:

Issued a new map of a "greater Tigray" by unilaterally and illegally redrawing the international boundary between Eritrea and Ethiopia that is based on established colonial treaties;

Resorted to the repeated use of force to implement its dreams of territorial aggrandizement;

Escalated the conflict by launching the first air strike against Eritrea on 5 June 1998;

Continued to perpetrate unparalleled violations of the human rights of innocent Eritreans;

Announced time and again its intention of solving the dispute militarily;

Now unleashed the war that it has been threatening all along; a fact it has finally admitted after the usual ploy of counter-claims at the beginning;

Violated the air moratorium (by its own admission after initial fabrications that Eritrea bombed first) by employing its air force in its ongoing offensive;

The international community continues to maintain an unbalanced stance.

This unjustified position has resulted in rewarding the Ethiopian regime for all its acts of aggression and flagrant violations of fundamental principles. More gravely, impunity has obstructed peace, postponing an early resolution of the conflict. In the event, the Government of Eritrea calls on the international community to abandon its unbalanced stance and double standard and to shoulder its responsibilities. First and foremost, Ethiopia must be condemned for its continued irresponsible use of force to dictate its will.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the text of the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative